



# MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor & City Council

FROM: Councilmember Dave Cortese

SUBJECT: Evergreen Visioning Project

DATE: April 19, 2005

APPROVED:

DATE:

4/19/05

## RECOMMENDATION:

Approve staff's recommendation to:

- 1) Accept the status report on the Evergreen Visioning Project/Smart Growth Strategy
- 2) Initiate an update to the Evergreen Area Development Policy and associated General Plan text amendments.

## BACKGROUND:

District 8 has been the focus of major planning efforts (largely due to its challenging geographic location, environmental issues and transportation constraints) since the early 1990s. The Evergreen Specific Plan (a planned residential community with mixed uses at the center of an 800-acre parcel), approved by the San Jose City Council in 1993, added over 3,000 residential homes to the southeast portion of Evergreen near the foothills. Less than a decade later, the Knight Program in Community Building sponsored the "Evergreen-Eastridge Knight Charrette" which brought a team of scholars into Evergreen for an intense week-long planning process to envision what the West Evergreen area could develop into that is both vibrant and an embodiment of smart growth. The Evergreen Visioning Project (hereafter, "EVP") is the next step in a progression towards a sustainable District 8. EVP was devised to methodically plan out the balance of District 8's development potential such that the area's basic needs are met from a transportation infrastructure and community recreational standpoint, by carefully reviewing the major remaining vacant parcels in District 8 and recommending development potential. Per the City of San Jose's adopted policy, this advanced planning effort (staff time, consultant studies) is being funded entirely by private dollars. All consultant studies, although financed privately, are and will be intensely scrutinized by the City of San Jose to ensure both accuracy and neutrality.

A task force consisting of charrette participants, neighborhood association leaders, Evergreen stakeholder representatives as well as representatives of the four major opportunity sites was convened in August 2003 to begin this arduous process. Part of the group's mandate was to create a set of interest-based statements to guide future development in Evergreen (Guiding Principles – see attachment 3 of the staff report). This completed, the Task Force embarked upon several meetings' worth of traffic data review, learning about housing types, visiting smart growth sites, and most

importantly, devising (with city staff) broad project descriptions for the EIR process. They have committed several hours on weekdays and weekends to get us to the point we are at today and for this alone the Task Force should be commended.

City staff has recommended setting the EIR project alternatives at the three suggestions put forth by the citizen members of the Task Force as well as the one suggestion put forth by the developer members of the Task Force and I strongly agree with this recommendation. At the close of this planning process (April 2006), the City Council will be asked to vote on a cap for the number of allocations to be included in the updated Evergreen Area Development Policy. This issue is not being dealt with at today's City Council Meeting. As has been thoroughly explained in the staff report, general plan amendments, prezonings, zonings, PD permits – the entire entitlement process (which will provide a finer level of detail for the community and ultimately the City Council to review and make decisions on) has yet to be undertaken. At tonight's meeting, the Mayor and City Council are being asked to:

- Accept the status report on the Evergreen Visioning Project/Smart Growth Strategy and;
- Initiate the update to the Evergreen Area Development Policy and associated General Plan text amendments. These text amendments are based on the community feedback received thus by the property owners.

#### **ANALYSIS:**

Urban infill growth traditionally has caused angst and frustration in local communities because it is conducted in an incremental and myopic fashion, absent any real consideration of the effects of such growth on transportation, recreational needs, economic development, etc. Furthermore, local communities have felt the "done-deal" syndrome is epidemic and that the opportunity to truly influence the planning process does not exist.

EVP has sought to develop a smart growth strategy that accounts for this previous mistrust and include the community in a meaningful way. The process is painstaking and there is often a temptation to deal with issues in the immediate versus at the appropriate junctures according to our workplan (staff report – attachment 4). For example, the staff report details concerns about school impact given that CEQA does not require this be analyzed when examining proposed development. However, because EVP is predicated on a set of non-negotiable interests (the Guiding Principles), which requires that school impact must be satisfied in order for any future development to be approved, this issue must be resolved in some fashion. Already one school district superintendent sits on the Task Force and the other districts have both been invited to address the Task Force as well as participate as members of the public. Some have already had initial discussions with the developer consortium on possible mitigations and creative ideas for addressing this issue. Over the remainder of this planning process this issue will be vetted thoroughly.

Concern exists around the proposed number of residential units to be approved for build-out in Evergreen. The citizen members of the EVP Task Force worked diligently in Winter 2004 and recommended three numbers of residential units (3800, 4200 and 4600 units) for study as part of the EIR. A fourth number (5700 units) has been suggested by the property owners on the Task Force for study as well. Of course the zero growth scenario will also be studied per CEQA law. These are all numbers for study; they are not a green light for growth approval. In the coming months the Task

Force and the community at large will consider more information that will allow them to give additional input as to the proposed number of units to be allowed for development.

Questions have arisen as to how each opportunity site should be designed. This work began some months back – rudimentary drawings were shown to the Task Force to help them visualize the possibilities for each site. The hope was for the Task Force to gain a sense of what sites (in general) could accommodate all-residential versus various combinations of mixed use. This exercise also helped in initially recommending placement of the amenities as well as in launching the market retail study. This is yet another issue that has not reached closure – further analysis needs to be brought forth.

To summarize, we are at the point in the process where there are many questions and many unresolved issues. The good news is that that is exactly where we are supposed to be. A planning process of this size, particularly as it deals with non-contiguous properties, is not meant to answer every question at once. The Task Force and the broader community will continue its energy and focus on working according to the workplan so that each issue can be addressed appropriately and in accordance with the Guiding Principles. The opportunities for community input have been and continue to be plentiful. To date, several measures have been undertaken to keep the community informed and invite them to share their comments:

- Extensive coverage in the Evergreen Times (circulation 20,000 households)
- Coverage in the San Jose Mercury News
- Community presentations at the following venues: District 8 Community Roundtable, Evergreen Business and Professionals Association, Silver Creek Valley Country Club HOA, Silver Creek Valley Community Organization, Hillstone Neighborhood, West Evergreen SNI, KONA SNI, Los Madres Group, Falls Creek NA, Pleasant Hills NA, Evergreen Little League, Cedar Grove NA, Silver Creek Valley Realtors Association, Evergreen School District PTA Council, Millbrook NA, Pala Rancho Cabana Club Board, Evergreen Valley Lions Club and the Sunrise HOA
- EVP Mailer circulated to 20,000 households in Evergreen
- Information booths at various events such as Day in the Park, SCCAOR Affordable Housing Fair, etc

I remain vigilant in ensuring that the public is informed at every step of the way and therefore our intense outreach efforts continue to improve and expand.